

FRIENDS IN MEXICO

By
DOROTHY HEIRONIMUS



Published by
AMERICAN FRIENDS BOARD OF MISSIONS
101 South Eighth Street
RICHMOND, INDIANA



FRIENDS IN MEXICO

By
DOROTHY HEIRONIMUS

Published by
AMERICAN FRIEND BOARD OF MISSIONS
101 South Eighth Street
RICHMOND, INDIANA



Territory Allotted to Friends by Cincinnati Plan

FRIENDS IN MEXICO

When Samuel and Gulielma Purdie, the first missionaries sent to a foreign country by American Friends, arrived in Matamoros, Mexico, in November 1871, they were beginning work in a country with a long and varied history, marked by two distinct civilizations: the Indian and the Spanish. The origin of the Indians of Mexico is obscure, but apparently they came in successive waves from some point to the north. At the time of the Spanish Conquest the Indians living in Mexico might have been roughly divided into two groups, one in the north with civilization at the stage we call savage, and the other in the central district with a much more highly developed civilization. In the far southern districts lived tribes stemming from the Mayan civilization of Central America. The first tribe known historically in the central region were the Toltecs, one of a group of related tribes. The period of their greatest power was in the ninth century. They were the builders of the great pyramids of Mexico, were skillful weavers and metal workers, and in many ways showed an advanced culture. Although they were a peaceful people, their rule was overthrown by fierce intertribal wars which grew out of the development of human sacrifice in their religious ceremonies. Their descendants held a high position socially in the succeeding periods, after their land was overrun by other tribes from their general family.

The last of the tribes to control this central region before the arrival of the Spaniards were the Aztecs, who came perhaps from California. The land near water was already occupied when they reached Mexico, and the Aztecs could find only a low, marshy island in the middle of Lake Tezcoco on which they might settle. From their village of grass huts begun in 1325 there grew the great city of two hundred thousand inhabitants which Cortes found two centuries later. Within the area they had come to dominate there remained a number of tribes which retained their independence or were only partially

loyal; these gave aid to the Spanish invaders. Historians today disagree as to whether the Aztecs had developed a real monarchy or only a loose confederacy. The highest power was in the hands of their priests. Social organization began with the clan, a family unit owning a plot of land in common and having its own god and its own place of worship. It was governed by a council. The clans made up the tribe, with each clan represented on the tribal council, which had governmental, judicial and military powers. The leaders were elected from among the members of the council. In their religion they too offered human sacrifices, and their raids for victims caused them to be bitterly hated by their neighbors.

Although the Indian tribes of Mexico had not developed a uniform culture at the time of the Conquest, their customs and habits of life have shown great power to endure. Even today in the more remote mountain villages their life goes on little changed since pre-Spanish days. It was the misfortune of the greater part of the Indians that the Spaniards in whose charge they were placed preferred to keep them in a dependent state rather than encourage them to develop their own powers and resources.

Spanish Rule. During the three hundred years between the arrival of Hernan Cortes in Mexico in 1519 and the Mexican War of Independence in 1821, the life of the majority of the Mexican people knew little progress. The Colony of New Spain became the personal property of the Spanish king, who gave much of it as a reward to the conquering soldiers and to his courtiers. The Indians on the huge estates (the one given to Cortes was larger than our State of West Virginia) were made subject to the new owners and received only very small wages for their work. Smaller grants of land were made to foot soldiers and later immigrants. These smaller holdings (less than two thousand acres) were called *ranchos*. Other land was held in the name of the king, and after Mexico gained her independence it became the property of the nation. During some later periods the distribution of this land became a national scandal.

The Spanish king tried to protect the conquered Indians by reserving sections of land around their villages for their use. Although this land was owned by the village (according to their clan system), it was usually cultivated individually. These tracts were called *ejidos*, which is sometimes translated as "the way out." During the course of the years many of the villages lost their land, either sold in time of urgent need or stolen by powerful landowners. The Indians were then dependent on the haciendas for their living; often they came into debt to the company-store and were bound to the estate. These debt-slaves were called peons and were subject to capture and punishment if they tried to escape from the hacienda.

Early Christian Missionaries. The Purdies were among the first Protestant workers to establish themselves in Mexico, but they were by no means the first Christian missionaries. Catholic missionaries accompanied the conquering Spanish soldiers and tried to protect the Indians from the cruelty of their new masters. In time, however, the Catholic Church itself acquired a great deal of land and became involved in the political life of Mexico. Some estimates give one half or more of the real estate of the country as belonging to the church. The Catholic Church was the state church, and Protestant churches could not be opened. Elementary education was in church schools. Although the church itself opposed the first efforts to gain Mexican independence from Spain, individual clergymen were leaders in the struggle for freedom, and two village priests, Miguel Hidalgo and Jose Maria Morelos, are revered today as national heroes.

When Mexico won her independence in 1821, the movement was really a conservative one. Because Spain herself had set up a liberal government, the Mexican conservatives backed a revolution led by Agustin Iturbide. After victory was won, white Mexicans took the places of the European Spaniards, and the life of the Indian peon went ahead without any improvement.

Protestant Work Begun. About twenty-five years later colporteurs of the American Bible Society accompanied American troops during the Mexican War and were able to do the first Protestant work in the Mexican villages. It was not until the Constitution of 1857 that the establishment of Protestant churches was permitted. A few independent Protestant missionaries began work in the following years, but Friends' work was among the first set up in an organized way. The Presbyterians began organized work in 1872, the Methodists in 1873, and the Baptists in 1881.

Great opportunities lay before the Protestant missions; just as there were great extremes in wealth, so were there also great differences in education and living standards among the Mexicans. Although the University of Mexico was founded in 1553, as late as 1912 it was estimated that seventy-five per cent



Typical Fiesta Costumes

or more of the Mexican people were illiterate. There were few public schools, and many of the private elementary schools gave inadequate training. Liberal leaders had tried to free education from the domination of the Catholic Church, and Benito Juarez, the great Indian president, encouraged the establishment of mission schools. In 1940 it was estimated that ninety per cent of the Mexican Protestants could read, as contrasted with only fifty per cent of the general population.

Samuel A. Purdie. Within a short time after their arrival in Matamoros Samuel and Gulielma Purdie opened a small school for girls in their home. Samuel A. Purdie was a young Friend from New York who had taught school in North Carolina, where he married Gulielma M. Hoover. Several years before the way opened for them to go to Mexico he became convinced that his life work was to be in Spanish-speaking countries, and he began to study Spanish as early as 1867. Believing that his special work was to be in the field of publication, he had selected a name for the paper he hoped to publish some day — *El Ramo de Olivo*, which means "The Olive Branch." In 1871 he learned that a voluntary association of Friends, called the Friends Foreign Missionary Association, had been formed in Indiana Yearly Meeting to send missionaries to foreign countries. He attended Indiana Yearly Meeting that fall and met with the Association, which agreed to support him and his wife in work in Mexico. In November that same year Samuel and Gulielma Purdie reached Matamoros, which is just across the river from Brownsville, Texas. They had expected to go further into the country, but a revolution broke out a few months later when President Juarez died, and it seemed wiser to stay near the border.

Publishing Department. In their little school Samuel Purdie observed that the textbooks were not so good as those in the United States; this was a new opportunity for the publishing house he still hoped to establish. In the summer of 1872

Friends in New York gave him a small press and type, and that September he printed the first issue of *El Ramo de Olivo*. It was published for more than forty years, under several editors, copies going to every Spanish-speaking country in the world. During the earlier years especially, when it was the only paper of its kind in the Spanish language, it exerted a widespread influence. Samuel Purdie also went ahead with his idea of preparing textbooks, which soon were adopted by the schools of other missions and by city schools, and some even became the authorized textbooks of the State.

Schools in Matamoros. In 1884 a large gift made it possible for Friends to build a school for girls, called Hussey Institute after its benefactor. The following year a boarding department was opened. This school continued under the direction of teachers from the United States, many of whose names are familiar to American Friends, as long as foreigners were permitted to teach in Mexican schools. While a day school for boys was developed at Matamoros, it did not include a boarding department.

Out Stations. Samuel Purdie soon began to make visits into the interior of the State of Tamaulipas, which lies next to Texas along the Gulf of Mexico. It is about three hundred miles long, and in its widest part it likewise measures about three hundred miles. Along the coast there is a warm, damp region, sub-tropical in climate. As the altitude increases, the climate becomes more temperate, and the central plain is dry. In the western part of Tamaulipas there are tall, forest-covered mountains, where mines and quarries are found. In the mountain valleys there is an ample supply of water, and the climate is good. When the Spaniards first came to Mexico, two principal Indian tribes were living in this region: the Huastecas and the Tamaulipas.

Today the people of the State of Tamaulipas are mestizos, that is, part Spanish and part Indian in blood. Unlike the United States, where the Indians were gradually pushed back

and in time very nearly exterminated, in Mexico the Indians still form a very important part of the population. Since very few of the Spanish immigrants brought wives to the New World, a mixed race soon appeared and has constantly increased in proportion to the pure Indians and Spaniards. In 1805 it was estimated that these mestizos made up thirty-eight per cent of the population, but the census of 1940 estimates that today perhaps eighty per cent of the twenty million Mexicans are mestizos. The pure Spaniards have never formed more than a small part of the population. In the southern part of Mexico a larger per cent of pure Indians is found than in Tamaulipas.

The villages and ranches visited by Samuel Purdie form a network across the State of Tamaulipas. At a number of points monthly meetings were established and schools opened. One of the earliest of the out stations was San Fernando, half way between Matamoros and the state capital, Victoria. New York Yearly Meeting provided its support in the early years, both for a school and for the pastor. For many years Gertrudis Garcia Gonzalez de Uresti served as pastor and director of the school.

In 1879 Samuel Purdie was urged to visit Gomez Farias, an Indian village in the mountains in the southern part of Tamaulipas. Village authorities were very friendly, and a monthly meeting was organized within a short time. A gift from two Minneapolis Friends made it possible for them to build a meetinghouse, which stood on a little level plot of ground on a ridge between two great mountain chains. A promising work at Soto la Marina, two hundred and fifty miles south of Matamoros, in the hot coastal region, had to be abandoned within a few years. Monthly meetings were established in Santa Barbara de Ocampo, Quintero, and Antiguo Morelos about 1885, with schools in the last two villages. Occasional services were held at various periods in Llera, Nuevo Morelos, Mendez, Tortillera, and several other villages and ranches. Palmillas was another of the early out stations, with Genaro Ruiz placed in charge in 1906; a school had been opened in 1904 and a meetinghouse



Meetinghouse at Victoria

dedicated in 1905. In 1911 a worker was located at Tula, in the far southwestern part of the State.

Escandon, once an important center of Friends' work in the southern part of the State, is now known as Xicotencatl. Organized work was begun there between 1881 and 1883 under the care of William Walls, a Canadian Friend, and his wife, Concepcion Aguilar.

Victoria Becomes Headquarters. Samuel Purdie believed that the headquarters of Friends' work should be located nearer the center of the field, if possible, and after about fifteen years at Matamoros he decided to make a transfer. He was persuaded to locate at Victoria, the state capital, where the climate was superior and the out stations could be more easily reached. He himself moved there in 1887, and the printing business was gradually transferred during the next few years. A school for boys was opened at once, supported by Baltimore Yearly Meet-

ing, while New York Yearly Meeting opened a school for girls in 1888. In May 1889, a monthly meeting was set up, with all members but one, students in the schools. The girls' school, for both boarding and day pupils, was called Penn Institute and was at first in charge of Margaretta M. Marriage. In 1895 Nancy L. Lee became its matron and continued until she was forced to leave by the Revolution in 1913. In 1928 the name of Penn Institute was changed to Colegio Nancy L. Lee in her honor. Nancy L. Lee served in the Friends Mexican Mission from 1889 until 1930, in the later years having charge of the Matamoros station.

A boarding school for boys was opened at Victoria in 1903 by Indiana Yearly Meeting. It was called Juarez Institute after Mexico's great President. From these schools went forth many of the teachers for the schools of the region, both the Friends' schools at the out stations and the new public schools.

Samuel and Gulielma Purdie continued in charge of the Friends' Mexican Mission until 1895, when they left to take up work again on a new frontier in Central America. Samuel Purdie died there in 1897. Their son Joseph was at various times connected with Friends' work in Mexico and Cuba. W. Irving Kelsey and his wife Anna succeeded the Purdies in the superintendency, coming first to the field in 1893 and continuing until 1906, including a furlough of three years for study. After his departure the work was divided for a time between George L. Levering for the evangelistic and school work and R. Solomon Tice as business manager. After the retirement of George Levering, Solomon Tice continued in charge of the work at Victoria and in the southern part of the field until his withdrawal from Mexico in 1920.

Agricultural Work. Much of the extension work carried on by Friends was in rural communities, and many of the pupils in the boarding schools at Victoria came from rural homes. Friends believed that they could make a valuable contribution to

the life of their Mexican members by giving instruction in better farming methods. Their first step, under the leadership of Solomon Tice, was the purchase of a farm outside Victoria, in 1908. Pupils of Juarez Institute aided Mr. Tice in preparing the land for cultivation. During the years it was operated, the farm was perhaps most successful in dairying and fruit raising. Another project, which Friends were not able to carry out, was the transfer of the boarding schools to a tract just outside Victoria, where they hoped to stress vocational training.

Victoria, founded in 1750, is located on the eastern slope of the foothills of the main mountain range, at an altitude of about two thousand feet. Although much of the surrounding country is arid, the highways pass through orange groves and the town itself is made beautiful by its many trees. Besides the oranges, there are lemons, limes, bananas, pineapples, and grapes growing near it. The climate is temperate, but in rare years freezing weather in winter causes suffering because the homes are not heated. It is in the center of a farming and stock raising region and has some small industries such as the manufacture of carbonated drinks and of chairs and other articles made from woven palm leaves. The population according to the 1940 census is 29,331.

It is clear that the extension of Friends' meetings and schools across the State of Tamaulipas was possible only because many devoted Mexican leaders associated themselves with the work. It is not possible to mention here all those who contributed to this development, beginning with Luciano Mascorro, the first Mexican Friends' minister, recorded in 1878, and Francisco Pena and Julio Gonzalez Gea, recorded in 1880. The roll of Friends from the United States who served in the Friends Mexican Mission is also long.

WORK BEGUN AT MATEHUALA

The second main center of Friends' work in Mexico developed in the State of San Luis Potosi, lying west and south of

Tamaulipas. Here, in the mountain town of Matehuala, Western Yearly Meeting opened work in November 1888. Although Matehuala is only about eighty miles from Victoria by direct line, they are separated by a high mountain range which even today is not crossed by any highway. The two fields developed separately, and the members had little contact with each other.

Western Yearly Meeting first opened work in Mexico City; but other denominations were working there and it seemed wiser to change the field. In Matehuala the new work met rather violent opposition from the local Catholic Church, and Friends had to endure the contempt and fear of many people



Meetinghouse at Matehuala

who believed they were dangerous heretics. By exercising patience they were able in time to gain the confidence of most of the people. As always in those days, a school was one of the first activities set up, and in 1891 Margaretta M. Marriage transferred from Victoria to Matehuala to take charge of the school.

Our station work was an important part of Friends' work around the Matehuala center, just as in Tamaulipas. But in-

stead of the agricultural district found in the eastern state, Friends working out from Matehuala came into desert mining towns where many of the people lived in extreme poverty. Friends were fortunate to secure the help of a number of able young Mexican leaders who made possible the extension of Friendly influence. One of these, Eucario M. Sein, married Margaretta M. Marriage and later became general secretary of the Sunday School work of all Mexico. Fortunato Castillo, who has been called the Quaker Saint of Mexico, also came from the Matehuala Meeting.

Ervin G. Taber and his wife, the first superintendents of the work in San Luis Potosi, transferred in 1905 from Matehuala to Cedral, originally an out station, where a meeting-house, schoolhouse, and home were built. Sarah A. Lindley came to have charge of the school work at Matehuala that same year. In 1900 medical work was set up at Cedral under the care of Dr. B. F. Andrews and his wife Mabel, but Friends were not able to secure funds to build and equip a hospital as they hoped.

Stations at various periods have included Catorce, La Paz, Vanegas, and other points. The work at Catorce was for a while located at Real de Catorce, a village high in the mountains overlooking a deep gorge. When Friends first opened work there, it had 15,000 inhabitants; but after the mining interests declined, many of the people moved away. For a number of years Don Felipe Gloria and his daughter were in charge of the church and school work there. La Paz was another mining town; many of the miners lived in caves in the sides of the arroyos.

Ervin and Margaret Taber remained in the work until 1898, when they were succeeded by Everett and Clara Morgan, who remained until 1913. Raymond and Minnie Holding, who had spent five years in Friends' work in Cuba, joined the Mexican work in 1906, being located first in Cedral and later

in Matehuala. The boarding department of the school at Matehuala, at first only on a temporary basis, was re-opened in 1905, and the school soon grew to be an important part of Friends' work in the region. Its graduates were of great assistance to the program of the Mission. Sarah A. Lindley was in charge of it and remained until forced to leave by the Revolution; during those years she was assisted by several teachers from the United States.

REVOLUTION

In 1884 Porfirio Diaz, who had served as President of Mexico from 1876 to 1880, seized control of the government and remained in power until 1911. It was a period of no real progress in the lives of the Mexican people, although some of the natural resources of the country were developed by foreign capital. When it was known that Diaz had decided to retire, there began a struggle among various groups and individuals to control the nation. This period of struggle and change, extending now over three decades, has included both times of physical warfare and of legal reforms. Historians speaking of the Mexican Revolution refer to the whole period.

Matehuala was the first of the Friends' centers to feel the direct blows of the revolution, and for a few days the Friends' workers were in danger. The town was left practically in ruins after the attack, with damage estimated at \$500,000. As soon as way opened, the missionaries returned to the United States. Victoria was captured by the revolutionists in November, while part of the Friends' workers were still there. Although fighting occurred near the mission property, no workers were injured and there was little property damage.

Maria and Fortunato Castillo. For several years no American workers were located at Matehuala or Victoria. The school at Matehuala was reopened in 1914 by Maria Castillo.



Maria Castillo

who had been teaching under the direction of Sarah Lindley. Those who have been associated with her in her teachings describe her as a "born teacher," with a true missionary spirit. When she entered the Friends' school as a pupil after finishing the public school, she was a devout Catholic, but after becoming acquainted with Friends' beliefs she asked to be received as a member of the Meeting. For a time after she became associated with Friends her brother Fortunato refused to attend the school, but he too was eager for the training he could receive there. In his turn he was attracted to the principles and beliefs of Friends and became one of the most able of the Mexican pastors. His ability was recognized by Protestant leaders throughout Mexico and by Friends in this country, and his untimely death in 1934 was a serious loss to Mexican Friends. He began to serve the Matehuala Meeting as pastor in 1918.

Many members of the Mexican Friends Meetings suffered severe hardship during this period of the Revolution. Besides the immediate loss in property and money by confiscation, food became very scarce. In some neighborhoods Friends' beliefs aroused antagonism; in the mountain village of Gomez Farias almost the entire membership was scattered, while the meeting-house and home were torn down and used for firewood by the soldiers. Friends in the United States and in Mexican communities which had been less severely affected contributed to the relief of the meetings in greatest need.

Protestant Cooperation. An important event during the early period of the Revolution was the agreement made between twelve Protestant denominations carrying on work in Mexico to divide the territory in so far as responsibility for supervision and extension were concerned. At a conference held in Cincinnati in 1914, Friends were made responsible for carrying on work in the State of Tamaulipas and the part of San Luis Potosi around Matehuala. The Protestant churches have since that time been known as the Evangelical Church in Mexico. The purpose of the agreement was to do away with overlapping of efforts, and Presbyterian missionaries in Tamaulipas were withdrawn not long afterwards. The union work of the Protestant churches has grown constantly ever since. Among the activities sponsored are a Union Theological Seminary in Mexico City and a Union Publishing House. Several Friends' pastors have studied at the seminary.

The new Mexican Constitution, adopted in 1917, imposed restrictions on the activities of the churches and religious organizations. When conditions in Mexico became enough settled for foreign workers to return to their posts, they found themselves forced to make important changes in their methods. These restrictions were in the main intended to control the excessive power of the Catholic Church and were not always applied strictly to the Protestant churches; the latter, however, usually

made it their policy to comply voluntarily. The most important regulations for them nationalized all church property and forbade foreigners to teach in Mexican schools or preach in Mexican churches.

FRIENDS' WORK ENTERS NEW PHASE

When Friends were able to return to Mexico, they found many adjustments to be made. Conditions in the rural districts were still unsettled, and often during the next few years both American and Mexican workers were unable to visit Friends' outposts because of the presence of bandits in the region. On the other hand, it was a period of great opportunity for Protestant work, for the Revolution had brought new freedom of thought and interest in a religion which would not put its chief emphasis on form and ceremony. A commission sent by the Friends Board of Missions in 1919 to study the field urged the reopening of Penn and Juarez Institutes at Victoria, financial aid for the Mexican pastors, support for the Union Press rather than revival of *El Ramo de Olivo*, new and suitable school buildings at Victoria, and introduction of medical work. By 1919 thirteen Friends' missionaries were again active on the field, although the meetings were served by four Mexican pastors: Roman Martinez at Matamoros, Leopoldo Zavala at Victoria, Santana Moreno at Xicotencatl, and Fortunato Castillo at Matehuala.

Matamoros. Except for short intervals Hussey Institute at Matamoros was able to keep open during the years of warfare, but as the public schools later grew and improved, the Friends' school found it difficult to meet their competition. Mexican teachers were able to keep it open for some years, but by 1929 it was closed. When the meetinghouse was destroyed by a cyclone in 1933 the meeting broke up. Out station work was revived and carried on successfully from Matamoros for a number of years. At San Fernando the monthly meeting was reorganized through the extension work of Arturo Rodriguez.

who also made regular visits to some eight other points. The new monthly meeting included eighty-four members, but they found themselves unable to secure funds for a meetinghouse.

Victoria. Missionaries from the United States reopened the work at Victoria in July 1917, with Solomon Tice in charge. Difficulty was experienced in finding Mexican pastors for the meetings around this center, and in 1923 it was reported that although there were ten congregations in Victoria Quarterly Meeting, only one pastor was serving. In 1928 Fortunato Castillo transferred from Matehuala to Victoria, where he remained until his death in 1934. He and his wife, Gabriela Franco de Castillo, were a great source of strength to the Victoria Meeting during their period of service.

The Colegio Nancy L. Lee and Juarez Institutes at Victoria had never had adequate buildings, but were conducted in



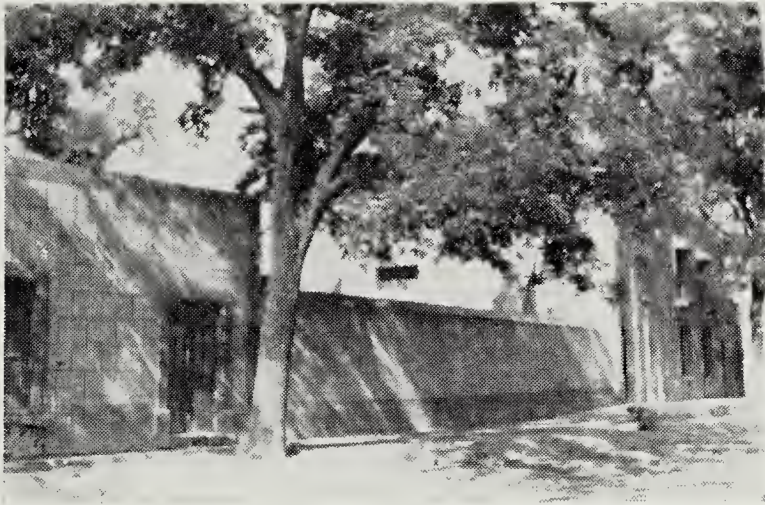
Gabriela Franco de Castillo

remodeled dwellings. Friends believed that a real opportunity lay before their schools if suitable buildings could be secured. A site was purchased for a boarding school, but a disastrous decrease in the income of the Board prevented the expansion of the schools. Here again, as the public schools improved, the Friends' schools could not offer the same advantages or pay their teachers as well as those in the public schools. Enrollment fell first in the lower grades, but for several years the upper classes were larger, since the State schools for those grades developed more slowly. In 1928 Jose Martinez, who had been serving as director of the Friends' schools, became the head of a new Government Industrial School opened at Victoria. The Friends' schools closed in 1932.

As soon as more peaceable conditions made extension work possible in the rural regions, missionaries and Mexican workers began their visits out from Victoria. The Monthly Meeting at Gomez Farias was reorganized with ninety-nine members, but a few years later an independent religious sect began to interfere seriously with the Friends' group. Congregations were organized at Canoas, Guemes, and Llera, and visits were made to Quintero, Ocampo and Jimenez. In the years immediately following the fighting the Friends' group at Xicotencatl was moderately prosperous. A new meetinghouse was erected in 1920, and a day school was maintained by the meeting. But the town itself has been dying, and the Friends' work has shrunk proportionately. At Villa Juarez, a large sugar plantation, a promising group was found, but they were handicapped by lack of both pastor and meetinghouse. This has developed into the present Friends' congregation at a newly formed town, Ciudad Mante.

Matehuala. Except for the time when Emmett and Zoe Gulley and later Douglas and Rebecca Parker were located at Matehuala while learning Spanish, the work in San Luis Potosi has been carried on entirely by Mexican Friends since the be-

ginning of the Revolution. They recognized the necessity of trained leaders and assisted several of their young people to prepare for church work. They supported an extension worker to care for the work in their out stations; in 1926 it was reported that their evangelist was making regular visits to fifteen towns and ranches. Maria Castillo, the director of the Friends School at Matehuala, has been one of their most devoted and efficient workers, and her brother Fortunato, pastor from 1918 to 1928, did much to strengthen the meeting. After his transfer to Victoria, Ismael Castillo Huerta served for a time as secretary and pastor. The Matehuala Meeting developed a strong



Home and Meetinghouse at Matehuala

social program, feeling a concern to help its community in health and recreation. In 1930 Francisco Estrello, one of their boys whom they had encouraged to secure an education, became their pastor. At Cedral the meeting and day school were re-organized, although only six members were left in 1917; they were able to increase their membership until a decline in the mining industry affected their work. At La Paz, another mining center, the Friends' group suffered severe persecution; the homes of Friends were burned, and two Friends were killed.

Work at Vanegas, a railroad junction point, was promising, but funds for a meetinghouse could not be secured.

The sudden retrenchment in funds supplied to the Mexican work by the American Friends Board of Foreign Missions came before the various meetings and congregations had been able to regain all they had lost in the early years of the Revolution. In communities where almost the entire adult population was illiterate, efficient leadership was a necessity, for the Bible itself was closed to a large part of the membership. As the effects of the depression became more general, most of the out stations had to be given up. The situation of the Mexican meetings was complicated by a fresh outbreak of warfare in Mexico arising from the opposition of the Catholic Church to the new constitution and government. It was a difficult time for all churches as a strongly anti-religious sentiment became more evident. In some localities Mexican Protestants were also subject to active persecution as heretics. Their position was made more difficult by the fact that many Mexicans tended to identify Protestantism with the United States. They remembered that since winning its independence from Spain, Mexico had lost half its territory to the United States and had seen American forces cross its border repeatedly. They knew that American investors controlled a large part of Mexico's natural resources and interfered in her internal affairs. They failed to recognize that the official attitude of the United States Government did not always correspond to the real sentiments of the American people.

Increasing poverty during the depression was another great handicap to the Mexican Friends' communities. As a whole, therefore, it may be said that the meetings were not able to take advantage of the opportunities which lay before them at the beginning of the period. Some progress was made in preparing Mexican workers for the field, but not enough to enable them to keep up work already begun, much less to push out into new fields. In June 1932 Clyde Roberts, the last of the workers

from the United States, withdrew from Mexico, where he had begun work in 1911.

WITH MEXICAN FRIENDS TODAY

The Revolution has brought profound changes which have affected the life of the communities where Friends have been working. One of the most important of these has been the redistribution of land. Although the area of Mexico equals 85% of that part of the United States east of the Mississippi, only a small part can be cultivated, perhaps eight or at the most twelve per cent, as contrasted with 50% in the United States. The corn crop of Mexico, its principal crop, is less than one sixth of the average Iowa crop, the Mexican wheat crop is one fifteenth of the Kansas average, and the bean crop one twelfth of the Michigan average. The struggle for land was intense even before the coming of the Spaniards. To the Indians independence has always meant economic opportunity rather than political freedom. The first efforts of the Government were to restore the village *ejidos* which had been lost since 1856. In recent years there has been expropriation of some of the big estates and redistribution among the workers. The owners are allowed to keep several hundred acres of their own choice and are offered payment in agrarian bonds for the land taken. By 1939 sixty-two and a half million acres had been distributed. To be successful the program of redistribution must also include education of the Mexican farmers in methods which will increase their output. The Indians of their own accord produce only what they themselves need. An even more serious obstacle to the success of the program is that there is not enough arable land to distribute to all those who want a share.

J. Merle Davis in *THE ECONOMIC BASIS OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN MEXICO* concludes from his study that often the lot of the peon has not been substantially

changed, although small plots of from four to ten acres have been distributed to several million peasants. Often a government overseer, less efficient and more corrupt, has replaced the master of the hacienda. But for hundreds of thousands the change has meant new liberty and opportunity. The farmers need equipment, capital, initiative, and experience. At times Mexico has been forced to import several of her staple products. On the other hand, the peon has gained hope, self reliance, greater freedom of thought. The future depends on higher ideals, more efficient leadership, and better methods.

In Tamaulipas the haciendas varied in size from around thirty-six thousand acres to almost two hundred and fifty thousand acres. Production was low, and less than one fourth of the grain supply needed in the district was grown locally. One report states that the land which has been redistributed produces fifty to two hundred per cent more than formerly and that a surplus of grain is now grown. An example of the direction taken by this land reform is the cooperative sugar mill at Ciudad Mante, a new town which has developed on a large sugar plantation, where Friends a number of years ago began services in a village known as Villa Juarez. Mante is today a flourishing town on the International Highway, with a population of 17,000, two new hotels, a fine new school, and other modern buildings. Stock in the mill is said to be owned by the government, the employees, and the cane-growers.

American Friends have also been interested in a redistribution project in the Laguna district two hundred miles west of Monterrey, through work camps sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee beginning in 1939. Young people from the United States have worked side by side with the Mexican villagers in building schoolhouses and other community buildings. In the days of the Spanish Conquest the Spanish king made a grant of over seven million acres in this area to a favorite courtier, and during the eighteenth century this holding

was increased to over eight million acres. During the rule of Diaz most of the land was sold to British and German owners; in 1936, when President Cardenas signed the expropriation decree, seventy per cent was foreign owned. The law of 1936 distributed the land among two hundred and twenty-one groups of land workers, comprising 28,503 families. Unlike the older *ejidos*, the land in this project is worked communally, with each worker receiving weekly wages and a share in the profits at the end of the season. The communities are taking an active interest in promoting better health and better education. The chief crop is cotton, and the project includes cotton gins, banks, dispensaries, and clinics.

Education. The new governments since Diaz in Mexico have endeavored to improve and extend the public school system. The emphasis in education has shifted from the privileged few to an attempt to lift the whole people. But during the early years of the Revolution there was little money to spend on schools, and even today there is great divergence in the progress of the various States. The closing of the church schools left many children without educational opportunity, since public schools were not at once opened. For some years the effort to free education from the domination of the church caused a swing to a definitely anti-religious attitude. The Third Article of the Constitution, which provides that the "education imparted by the States shall be socialistic, and furthermore will exclude all religious doctrines . . ." has been subject to some extreme interpretations. The most recent attitude is that the Mexican schools shall be socialistic only in the sense that the pupils shall be taught to subordinate the desire for individual gain to a concern for public welfare. The religious beliefs of the pupils are to be respected, although religious propaganda in the schools is forbidden.

The most advanced schools in Mexico have endeavored to adapt their courses to the needs of the communities, believing

that education is not merely a matter of books but also of lifting life in all its phases. They have stressed instruction in health, housing, diet, agriculture, crafts, etc. At times they have been handicapped by shortage of funds, shortage of teachers, and opposition to their anti-religious attitude. The preparation of teachers varies, those in the city schools having had more training. The salaries run up from four pesos daily. (Exchange in 1942 valued the peso at about twenty cents in United States money, higher than for several years previously.) A good system of federal supervisors has been set up, although its efficiency naturally depends on the quality of leadership under each administration.

In Victoria there are some fifteen or twenty primary schools, various special schools such as business colleges and others, a normal school, a high school, a preparatory school (cf. the junior college), an industrial school, an agriculture school, and two night schools. Mante is proud of its fine modern school building only recently erected. The schoolhouse at Xicotencatl is also new, the only new building in the village. Matehuala does not have the normal schools and special schools, since it is not a state capital like Victoria, but it does have primary and secondary schools.

The forced closing of the church schools made changes necessary in the programs of Protestant missions, even though in many cases their schools were permitted to operate after the Catholic schools were closed. Today Friends have only one school open in Mexico, whereas in 1910 four Friends' boarding schools and five day schools enrolled more than a thousand pupils. The school at Matehuala, the only one still open, is operated by Maria Castillo as a private school without support from the meeting. However, Friends' influence still endures in several of the public schools through teachers trained in Friends' schools.

The Evangelical Church in Mexico has endeavored to find new ways to reach the young people of school age. Several



**Home and Former School Building
Victoria**

denominations have transformed their schools into boarding homes for pupils from outlying district who are attending government schools. In these homes they can offer Christian surroundings and also some supplementary classes. Such a students' hostel might be developed at Victoria, where several State schools are located. The buildings formerly used as schools by Friends could be remodeled to accommodate a number of boarders, who would thus be under Friends' influence during their school years.

Labor and Industry. The seizure of the oil and other industries by the Mexican Government from foreign owners, which has naturally aroused resentment among those owners, has not had direct influence on Friends' centers, since they are not in the regions affected. It is a complicated question which cannot be developed in this short booklet. During the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz many Mexicans felt it was unjust that their country should receive no benefit from the wealth extracted from their soil, as the profits went to foreign investors. On the other hand, some authorities believe that these profits did

not equal the amount spent yearly within Mexico in carrying on these industries. The question of payment for the oil wells confiscated by the Mexican Government has been the subject of a long dispute, and only in 1942 does it appear that the United States has reached an agreement with Mexico on the price to be paid.

Since the outbreak of the Revolution the organization of labor has proceeded rapidly. In pre-Revolutionary days the position of the laborers in industry had been little better than that of the peons in agriculture. As is too often the case, the movement to improve their condition has sometimes been handicapped by dishonest leadership and ignorant and unwise demands. Matehuala suffered from this when the workers in the big American smelter demanded concessions which made it unprofitable for the smelter to continue operation. As a result, a large part of the population lost its employment. So rapid a change from a medieval system of labor to a modern one could not be made without friction and mistakes, and time will be needed to work out a system adapted to Mexican requirements today.

Religion. The religious outlook has varied during the Revolution; but since Avila Camacho became President in 1941, there has been less antagonism toward religion on the part of the Government. President Camacho himself is known as a Christian, although some other officials are not. In some districts of Mexico Protestants still meet dangerous opposition from fanatical elements, but in our established Friends' centers Friends have been free to develop within their capacities.

During the years since 1932 the Mexican Friends Meetings have continued to experience difficulty in finding trained leaders. Laws which restrict the activities of registered ministers (they cannot vote, hold office, or assemble for political purposes) have discouraged many able young men from preparing for the ministry. In 1933 the eight organized Friends' meetings

were cared for by Juan Valverde at Matamoros, Fortunato Castillo at Victoria, and Francisco Estrello at Matehuala. All three had received their training at the Union Seminary in Mexico City. Leopoldo D. Zavala, an older man, had become pastor at Xicotencatl. When Fortunato Castillo was no longer able to work, Juan Valverde was transferred to Victoria, and the Matamoros Meeting was left without a pastor. In 1937 Francisco Estrello resigned to take up interdenominational work. The Matehuala Meeting secured a pastor of another denomination, but he did not prove satisfactory. Juan Valverde resigned from the pastorate at Victoria in 1939, leaving only Leopoldo Zavala serving in the whole field.

The Matehuala Meeting is still without a pastor, although it hopes that Domingo Ricart, a Spanish Friend, may be able to serve them as a lay leader if he can secure passage from England. Changing industrial conditions have caused many of the members to move away, but there are a number of people in the community who are interested and could be reached if a leader could be secured who could give full time to building up the meeting. At Cedral, an almost deserted mining village, a substantial meetinghouse of Mexican architecture still stands, and a few families maintain a Sunday School for their children. Friends still live at La Paz, also, holding their membership in the Matehuala Meeting.

A large group of the Matehuala Friends have found employment at Monterrey, an industrial center with a population of 175,000. They have organized a monthly meeting, but have no meetinghouse. Francisco Estrello, who is now serving as lay leader at Victoria, visits the Monterrey Meeting twice each month, and there is an opportunity to increase the work in the future if a permanent leader and meetinghouse can be secured.

Xicotencatl is another Friends' center which has suffered loss through shifting populations. Leopoldo Zavala, now past eighty, continues to serve the dwindling membership of the

meeting, and a women's society numbering fewer than half a dozen members gives valiant support in keeping the meeting-house in repair. Ciudad Mante, on the other hand, is a growing town; there some forty Friends are meeting regularly under the leadership of several who are members of the Victoria Meeting, and Francisco Estrello makes frequent visits. This growing center also needs a meetinghouse.



F. Estrello

Victoria continues to be the center of Friends' influence and activity in Mexico. The meeting has been fortunate to secure Francisco Estrello as its leader. The ability of this young Friend both in writing and in guidance of young people is recognized throughout the Evangelical Church in Mexico, and in 1941 he served as the Mexican representative at the first Latin American Congress of Evangelical Youth, held in Lima,

Peru. Leadership of this trained and inspired type is needed to reach the Friends of Victoria, who were prepared by their education in the Friends' schools for the important positions they now hold in the community. Francisco Estrello is giving special emphasis to work with young people and to the development of lay leadership in the meetings he visits. Summer camps are being held for the boys and girls, under the finest leaders to be found in the Evangelical Church in Mexico, while laymen's institutes offer training for older members.

Mexico, in its pioneering in social and economic relationships, needs the leadership of devoted and devout Christians such as our own nation was fortunate to have in its early days. Already it sees that no formula for reform which tries to build without Christ can be successful. In men and women who have dedicated their lives to Christian service it will find those who will serve their country with integrity and foresight. The responsibility for providing the inspiration and guidance throughout a large territory rests on the Mexican Friends, who in numbers and resources are inadequate to the demands upon them. They look to Friends in the United States for assistance and a truly sympathetic interest.

VANZANT & WARFEL, INC.
RICHMOND, INDIANA

1M---5-42